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Mr. S. W. and

Tooth's Letter on the
Death of Mrs. Fletcher
1815

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A LETTER

To the Loving and Beloved People of the Parish of

Madeley, and its Vicinity,

WHO HAVE LOST A FRIEND TO PIETY

IN THE DEATH OF

MRS. FLETCHER,

Widow of the Rev. J. W. FLETCHER,

(or de la Flechere,)

LATE VICAR OF MADELEY, SHROPSHIRE.

BY MARY TOOTH.

The sweet remembrance of the just
Shall flourish while they sleep in dust.

A Mother in Israel hast thou been, and thy works
shall praise thee in the gates

IRONBRIDGE :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY WILLIAM SMITH.

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Entered at Stationers' Hall.

Wes. 1639

A LETTER, &c.

My dear Friends,

KNOWING that it is your ~~de-~~ desire to hear something respecting the close of the life of my invaluable friend, Mrs. FLETCHER, now in glory, and being assured that none but myself can undertake the work, as I alone was her constant companion, being separated scarcely a day for more than 15 years, I have endeavoured, (while my mind has been exercised with the most painful feelings of heartfelt sorrow for the loss of the best of friends, the wisest of counsellors, and the tenderest of parents,) to set down a few circumstances relative to the close of a life surpassing in usefulness most of her fellow mortals.

It was upon the 9th of December, 1815, a day never to be forgotten by

me, that my Elijah was taken to heaven. O that the mantle might rest on me! She had had many severe attacks from illness in various ways, in former years, and sometimes was restored as by miracle; I therefore continued hoping she would be spared this time also; nor did I give up that hope till two days before her removal from earth to heaven.

Though she would be often saying to me, "My dear child, do not flatter yourself that I shall be long with you, for I feel I am going;"—yet, still willing to hope for what I so much desired, I continued thinking, it may be the Lord will look graciously upon me, and save me from drinking this bitter cup for a while longer: but on December 7th, I found it necessary to render her more assistance than usual while rising in the morning, and conscious that this was a mark of increased weakness, I became greatly affected; and, having done all she at that time needed, I re-

tired to plead with the Lord that she might yet be restored; but, alas! I had no power, and was constrained to leave it to divine wisdom to do what he saw best; and before I rose from my knees, it was strongly impressed on my mind,

“The everlasting doors shall soon the saint receive,

Among yon angel pow’rs in glorious bliss to live;
Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”

From that moment I gave up every hope of her longer abiding in the flesh; though once or twice afterwards, my strong desire led me to plead, that he who had raised the ruler’s daughter, the widow’s son, and dead Lazarus, would yet restore her: but all the answer I could obtain was, Divine wisdom cannot err.

For the last month of her life, her breath was more oppressed than usual: it had been much affected for years, upon motion; yet when she sat still, or laid herself down at night, she could breathe quite easy; but the middle of November

last her breathing was affected both while she sat still and when she was laid down. She had also a troublesome cough, that disturbed her rest at night; and when this was the case, her strength quickly declined. She had had a wound for two years and 3 quarters in one side of her left breast, which was at first supposed to be a cancer; but her sufferings from this were not to be compared with what she suffered from her breath.

Yet, with all that she went through, how did she labour for the good of souls! Many times she has gone to speak to the people, when she has said, "It is like as if every meeting would take away my life, but I'll speak to them as long as I can; while I've any breath, and power to get out, I'll not spare myself." And truly she did not, as will be readily testified by many hundreds who have been in the habit of attending her meetings.

I am inclined to think, that the 24th

of last July will not be forgotten by a large proportion of the great numbers who crowded to hear her : she explained the 25th chapter of Matth w's Gospel. It was the last monday night she was able to speak to a listening crowd of attentive hearers, some of whom had come many miles, but did not think much of the pains they took, because of the spiritual good they derived from the opportunity. I remember she spoke in a peculiarly striking manner on the necessity of being born again. When she came to the 13th verse, " Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh," and from the following verses respecting the Talents, she enlarged much ; powerfully insisting upon the right use of the understanding, will, mind, or memory, with every affection ; the right application of time, with every penny of money ; and the watching over the tongue, which she observed might enjoy the honor of being God's advocate, but for want of watchfulness

was, as the Apostle expresses it, "set on fire of hell."

But it is in vain for me to attempt to repeat any part of what at that time was felt in many hearts. She continued to meet her classes occasionally, as she had strength for it, until the middle of October. Her two o'clock sabbath-day meeting she spoke at on the last sabbath of September: this was her last public engagement. Many striking proofs we have had that her labours of love in this way were not in vain; for it is certain many souls were brought to God through her. In one of her noon meetings she read some account of the opening of her room for the preaching of the gospel; and as I believe it will not be unacceptable to you, I will insert it as it was put down by one present at the time of its first being used for the good of souls, and the glory of God.

"The first sabbath in July, 1788, the room at the Vicarage in Madeley

was opened ; it had been for many years a barn, but was now fitted up for divine worship.

“ The Rev. Melville Horne preached from I Kings, chap. ix, ver. 3. “ And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me ; I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there, and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.” He observed how great was our privilege in being so favored with places and opportunities of quietly waiting upon the Lord, and the advantage of sitting under a pure gospel ; and how much would be required of them to whom so much was given.

He then sweetly invited us to turn our eye towards the living Temple, in whom we should be always sure to meet the Father's love : and, in conclusion, read the part following the text, to the 10th verse ; pointing out the covenant

blessing on obedience, and the certain destruction which would follow the reverse.

“As soon as he had ended his sermon, before he had time to pray, he was suddenly called out to a funeral which was waiting, and left Mrs. Fletcher to dismiss the people. She observed the solemnity of the occasion, and the great expectation she felt in her heart that the Lord would pour out his Spirit on the souls before him; and entreated them to look up, and open their hearts to receive it. As an encouragement, she reminded them of the many prayers which for twenty-five years had been night and day offered up in their behalf; the purport of which was, that they might behold a reconciled Father in the face of Christ Jesus: that in the dedication of Solomon's Temple, the people were called to eat and to drink, and to send portions to those who had none. She also observed, all the glory of Israel, being outward, was but a type

of the inward glory of the christian church. Therefore, (said she,) this day God calls you to eat and to drink, yea, to take of the water of life, and that freely. But are some dry and barren? He sends portions to them that have none. She then added, I will speak freely: since I have been preparing this place, these words of our Lord have repeatedly come into my mind, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." This has caused me sometimes to think, does my Lord intend shortly to remove me to himself? Be that as it may, I have a confidence that this place will be continued to your use for some years to come, and that the Lord will bless you therein. And now I have two petitions to ask you, which I think you will not deny me. My dear friends, my first petition is, that you would consider this day as a fresh covenanting with the Lord to be his without reserve, and that we may with one consent unite in a solemn vow never to draw back. My second

request is, that when I am laid silent in the grave, (which, be it sooner or later, most of you will probably see,) I ask you, at *that time* to remember the transaction of this day, and whensoever you pass by this place, grant me a moment's thought ;—the carnal say, the tribute of a tear : not so with me ; no, my beloved friends, I rejoice not in your tears, but in your happiness :—grant me then a moment's thought, I will tell you what it shall be. On the first sabbath in July, 1788, beneath that roof I covenanted to be the Lord's ; then pause a moment, and say, “ Thy vows are upon me, O God ; I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot draw back.”

“ She then concluded this uncommonly solemn meeting with prayer, after singing the following hymn :

Spirit of holiness descend,
And consecrate this place ;
With thine Almighty power defend,
And crown it with thy grace.

Let it be stored with heavenly wheat,
 The harvest of the Lord,
 With sinners brought to Jesu's feet,
 Obedient to his word.

No more design'd for earthly good,
 Or product of the ground,
 May it be fill'd with sacred food,
 And thy high praise resound.

Ye neighbours who surround this place,
 The message is for you ;
 Despise not then his offer'd grace,
 Nor slight the heavenly dew.

How many pray'rs in heaven are filed
 For Madeley favor'd flock ;
 Behold a Father reconciled
 In Jesus Christ your Rock.

Then let the joys of heaven abound,
 O'er Sinners brought to God ;
 And many at his feet be found,
 All wash'd in Jesu's blood.

That voice which once you loved to hear
 Invites you from above,
 And bids you cast off every fear,
 And trust in Jesu's love.

Then let us vow to serve the Lord,
 And choose his holy ways ;
 To walk according to his word,
 Devoted to his praise.

And when the lips that call you now
 Are silent in the dust,
 Remember *then* our solemn vow,
 And shew in whom you trust.

For soon the Archangel's trump shall sound,
 And summon us on high ;
 The Shepherd with his Flock be found,
 And all our tears be dry."

Some circumstances occurring last summer, which brought to her recollection afresh the solemn season of the opening of her room, 27 years before, she took the paper I have now been copying, and read it to the people ; and there is good reason to believe, that our heavenly Father was pleased to make this also, such a season of refreshing to some then present, that they will ever remember it with gratitude : indeed, all her labours of love were, in a peculiar manner, blest of God. Six years after the opening of her room, the old church was taken down, and the church service was performed in it till the new one was erected.

Amongst the numerous company that will have to ascribe glory to our God for good received through her instrumentality, under that roof, I cannot forbear saying, my hope is, that I shall stand among the ransomed of the Lord, and say, "I was born there." Yes, my friends, I must say, the good Lord made her the means of the awakening, conversion, and deepening the work of grace in my soul: and while I give all the glory to my God for the grace received, I cannot but feel much love to the channel through which that grace was communicated. Nor are my feelings in this peculiar, they are the feelings of a number of lively souls, who bless God that the sound of her voice ever reached their ears; and in whose affections she will long live, and though dead yet speak.

On the 4th of September, 1808, she was to have had a meeting at six o'clock in the evening, but was prevented through sickness; she therefore wrote the following note, for me to read to the people:

My dearly beloved in the Lord,

My delight is to worship the Lord with you, and many, very many, sweet times have we had together; but our unerring master has, at this time, been pleased to confine me by a greater degree of weakness than I ever remember before; therefore, by my pen, through the mouth of my dear friend, I take this method to assure you, I am with you in spirit, though absent in body; and I intreat you all to make trial of the ground whereon you stand: when sickness and death approaches, there is no comfort but in the love of God; I find none but what I derive from that source. O that you would therefore do as Jacob did, be earnest with the Lord, that his love may fill your heart, as the scripture expresses it, the love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost, given unto you. If you get your hearts full of the love of God, you will find that is the oil by which the lamp of faith will be ever kept burning; love makes all our duty easy; a soul united as one.

spirit to the Lord, if temptation presents, has a ready answer ; such a one instantly cries out, How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? against Him in whom my soul delighteth ? Pray, my friends, pray much for this love ; and remember that word, “ He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Thus did she, whether sick or well, labour for the increase of spirituality in the hearts of the people : her eyes were always heaven-ward, and whether at home or abroad, she was ever endeavouring to draw souls to a closer walk with God. She was often reminding us who were about her, of the fulness that was to be obtained. I shall not exceed the truth, if I say that none more fully possessed the happy art of leading souls into a close internal walk with God, than she did ; being herself so experimentally acquainted with the path of righteousness, she was well qualified to conduct others therein : and as to her own soul,

she was continually drinking more and more into the spirit of her Lord. Her capacious soul was always panting after deeper and deeper draughts of the living water; frequently telling me what sweet openings the Lord had been giving her, and what enjoyment in the filling and enlarging of her desires. She was ever desirous that souls would be looking for great things from the hands of the Lord; frequently saying, "what pity it is that any rest in low attainments, when so much might be gained; has not the Lord said, Ask what you will, and I will do it for you." This last sentence was one of those sayings of our Divine Master, in which she delighted to the end of her course. I believe there are numbers who cannot forget with what energy she would recommend the wrestling Jacob; and whatever duty she enforced upon the minds of others, she was exemplary in practising herself. It was always her custom, unless some providential call prevented, to go from secret prayer to the class, and from the

class to prayer : thus did she habitually draw fresh supplies of light and life from above ; and when the seed was sown, her unwearied supplications followed it. Indeed she was a great lover of prayer, and often continued in that exercise on her knees for such a length of time, (while her strength would admit of it,) that I have sometimes gone into her chamber to remind her how long she had been, fearing she would injure her body ; but on such occasions she has sweetly smiled, and said, "I shall be none the worse for prayer ; come, kneel down by me, let us pray together." At another of these times, she has said, "No, not leave off praying yet ; my dear husband used to say, *let me wrestle till I die*. I can't leave off yet, but come and join me ; great things are promised where two agree to ask in the name of Jesus." Many of these times have become seasons of peculiar advantage : *my* soul has cause to praise the Lord both for her private, social, and public exercises. A paper containing

some short hints for prayer, which I found in a testament that lay by her the last week of her life, I will here insert. She begins, first in the morning, by asking permission to throw herself again at the feet of her most gracious loving Saviour, and to praise him for preserving her from every evil through the night, and for having brought her to another day. She notes as subjects of praise, a degree of ease, eye-sight, hearing, the use of her limbs and understanding; and then names, as heads for supplication, the power to walk with God, to take up every cross, and to watch the tongue.

Second time of private prayer.

Intercession for our relations in England, Switzerland, Aleppo, &c. for the spirit of prayer, light into my state of soul, increase of faith, for power never to offend with my tongue, with praise and acts of resignation.

Third time.

For a *ready* mind to do all the commands of my God, for deep humility, to

be brought into the entire region of love, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that nothing may remain in my soul but pure love alone; for faithfulness in the use of every talent; light and liberty in the meetings, and a special blessing on every member thereof; for the children, the ministry, and the whole parish.

Fourth time.

Praise for the mercies of the day, intreaties for a spiritual night; that the Lord would fulfil that promise, "I will bless them that bless thee," first, by returning all the kindness they have shewn to me; secondly, by repaying any injuries I may have rendered to any by thought, word, or deed, if on earth by such blessings as are most for their good, if in heaven by adding to their crown so much more for what they had suffered from me.

After mentioning these four times of private prayer, she then notices praying with me before going to bed; at which time she says, "remember all the sufferers who have recommended them-

selves to my prayer." The paper concludes with family prayer, of which she says, "at each time of family prayer, to read with profit, and to pray with fervor."

I can witness with how much diligence she discharged this duty of family prayer, always being remarkably careful that every one who worked in her house should be present upon this occasion ; for she looked upon it as an opportunity of giving them a message to their souls : and times more than I can number she has had such up stairs, that she might pray with them, when her breath has been so oppressed that she has said, (while they were coming,) "I do not know whether I can speak a word, but but if I can I will." The last time the washerwoman and the gardener were in her study, her prayer will not soon be forgot by the persons present ; she was at that time in a state of great bodily suffering, (it was only a few weeks before her translation to glory,) and was not able both to read and pray ; I therefore

read a short account of a pious man out of the Methodist Magazine, and she prayed, mentioning each distinctly in such a clear, striking, and forcible manner, as if fully persuaded she should never pray with them again. All was deeply solemn, and I could not help observing, when we rose from our knees, I did not remember ever feeling such a time before: she answered, "I want them to turn to God; I long for the salvation of all around us."

The gardener's wife has since told me, that when her husband returned home at night, he told her, "he never heard any thing like that morning's prayer."

But it was not an uncommon thing for her prayers to be unusually blessed to souls: many have come from far to see her, that she might plead with God in their behalf; some of these, when they have come to her, have been laden with guilt, a heavy load, but our good

Lord has heard the voice of her supplications, and so manifested himself as a sin-pardoning God, that the mourners have been comforted, their sorrows have been turned into joy, and they have left her habitation to go on their way rejoicing. I refer not in this to a solitary instance, but mention it as a circumstance that was often recurring.

Of her I may say, every talent given was duly improved; for she did not spare herself, but her strength, her time, and substance, she chearfully devoted to the benefit of the souls and bodies of others; and as her prayers were very prevalent, so were her charities very extensive. Upon this subject, before I proceed, I feel it my duty to make one remark: I have heard some persons say, "O she was imposed upon:" But, as I knew her better than any person now alive, I must beg leave to affirm, that she was not the dupe of the designing; her good sense was equal to her piety, and her charities were conducted with

such a degree of wisdom, that fraudulent cases, in a general way, were detected by her: though, whenever a doubtful case occurred, she would say, "it is better to be on the right side, and to give a trifle to an unworthy object, than run a risk of overlooking one that ought to be relieved." Upon such occasions no doubt the worthless have sometimes partaken of her bounty, but never to any considerable amount. She was one of a thousand for economy; always sparing of expense upon herself, that she might have the more to give to the household of faith. She would often say, "God's receivers upon earth, are, Christ's church and poor." When I have proposed the purchase of some article of clothing for her, she would say, "is it quite necessary? if it is not, do not buy it; it will be much better to give the money to some of our poor neighbours, than to lay it out upon me." Nor was this once only; it was invariably her conduct, and with great truth it may be said, that

"What her charity impair'd
She saved by prudence in affairs."

She was always remarkably exact in setting down every penny she expended. she kept four different accounts, in which all she spent was included ; these four were, the house, sundries, clothes, and poor. We have often at the end of the year been astonished to find the house expenses so small, considering how many had shared with us : at such times, she has said, "It is the Lord who has blessed our bread and water." I have, in former years, taken up the book in which she kept her accounts, and wept over it, with the consideration, that I should one day probably have to settle it alone ; and now I have drank of the bitter cup. A few days ago, I entered upon the work ; and I think it right, as a confirmation of what I have before advanced, to state the difference between the expenses of her clothes, and what she had dispensed to the poor. On making up the account of her clothes, I found the whole year's expenditure amounted to nineteen shillings and sixpence ; this was every penny that had

been laid out on her own person for the whole year.*

I then made up the poor's account, and found the amount to be 181l 16s 1d thus liberally had she dispensed abroad. But her desire of communicating comfort to the afflicted, was very extensive: I do not think she ever heard of a person in distress, but, if in her power to do it, she by some means contrived to send relief. To comfort the distressed, was always a real comfort to her. With regard to this world's wealth, it was no more to her, than dust in the balance. She has often said, and I am sure with great truth, "Gold is no more to me than dust; the gold of Ophir than the stones of the brook." At another time

* I do not mean it to be understood, as though she never spent more than this in a year; but this I must say, it was very seldom that her clothes account exceeded five pounds per year, and in general it was under that sum: she saw it a duty not only to avoid expending much in this way, but was also very careful in the use of her clothes.

she would say, "It is not so important what we have, as how we use it." Indeed she was truly diligent, so to occupy with this and every talent, as to be always well-pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

Her love to every one was so abundant, that she was unwilling to find a fault in any one; but, ever desirous of casting the mantle of love over the failings of each, she would seek out the excellencies of those with whom she was concerned, and would find an excuse for the conduct of any, if the case would admit of it. And while her kindness was thus extensively manifested to all with whom she had any intercourse, her gratitude to others who shewed marks of love to her, was no less; for when her kind friends sent her any thing they thought would be acceptable, it was her study to think how she could return them an equal token of love; and if nothing was brought to her mind to do for them at the time, she would say, "Well,

if I can do no more for them, I can pray for them : ”—then would she fervently cry to the Lord, that he would repay them for her, and impart to them spiritual blessings for all the temporal good they had communicated to her. I never knew her sit down to partake of any thing that was the gift of a friend, without first praying for the donor. She would have thought herself very guilty to have omitted this, but it was a thing she made such a point of, that I do not think she ever forgot, even in one single instance.

And while her gratitude to the creature was thus evidently discerned, her praise and thanksgiving to the Creator was still more abundant. Never was any one more completely sensible of surrounding mercies, or more fully satisfied with divine appointments. She has for a long time lived in the spirit of praise, frequently saying, “ What blessings has the Lord bestowed upon me ! how comfortable has he made me in my old age ;

though I am left here, and my dearly beloved husband, and my Sally, my child, in glory, yet I know no lack; for how has the Lord fulfilled that word, given me so many years ago, *God will make you a comfortable habitation.**

And what a comfortable habitation has he made me! all is so suitable, every thing that I want; and such a loving people, I may well say I dwell among my own people: and that the Lord should bring you from a distance, first to be my spiritual child, and now my careful housekeeper, my tender nurse, my faithful friend."

This was the way that in her common conversation she enumerated the mercies of the Lord; and as the close of life drew nigh, the spirit of praise increased more and more. Not quite three weeks before she was taken from us, she mentioned to some friends, a

* This refers to a dream which will be published when her life and journals come out.

dream she had had many years ago. She dreamt she was going down a rough road, with a short wall by the side of it, which she leaned upon, and called the wall of salvation : all the light she had, while getting along with difficulty, was a twinkling star. She persevered to the end, but then found a mud-pond, which when she saw, she thought, well, if this is the way, I'll plunge in ; but while she was thinking to do so, in a moment of time, the twinkling star became a bright comet ; and by the blazing light it gave, she discovered a clean narrow path by which she was instantly over, she hardly knew how. After our friends were gone, she said to me, "That dream came so powerfully to my mind, I could not help repeating it ; it is being accomplished now." Several times after that evening, she said to me, "I am going down the rough walk ; this illness has been a long and painful one, but I lean upon the wall of salvation, and the comet will come." She seemed to be assured, from the time this dream was so impres-

sed upon her mind, that in an instant of time she should be removed from a state of suffering to an inconceivable blaze of glory, that would as much outweigh every spiritual enjoyment upon earth, as the comet in her sleep outshone the twinkling star.

Before this last three weeks of her life, in which such a striking application of her dream was made to her, the enemy had at times suggested what a state of suffering lay before her, if at the end of her affliction she should be long confined to a sick bed ; or it might be that I may be so wearied by long fatigue, as not to be able to assist her in that helpless state ; and to have had strangers about her would have been a most peculiar trial. But out of all this, how soon did the Lord deliver her : indeed the trial never lasted long, for she knew

“ That as her day, her strength had been,”
and believed,

“ So it would for ever be.”

One day, when her sufferings were great, she said, "How sweet are the words of the Apostle, The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall follow." And on the 11th of November she mentioned the divine aid she found in these words, "Call upon me in the time of trouble ; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me : " these were words she frequently mentioned, and sometimes would add, "Yes, my Lord, I will call upon thee ; and I shall glorify thee too."

Another time she said, with peculiar energy, "They that trust in the Lord, shall never be confounded." And one day, after naming some sentences which she felt a spring of pleasure in, she added, with much animation in her countenance, "And that given so many years ago now comes with fresh power, *Thou shalt walk with me in white* : and when I answered, how can that be, seeing I am not worthy ? it was repeated, but thou shalt walk with me in white, for I

will make thee worthy ; I will thoroughly purge away thy dross, and take away thy tin ; everlasting life is won, glory is on earth begun."*

One night she spake of finding a powerful application of these words, " I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation."

On the 18th of November, with much animation she often repeated, " I am thine, and thou art mine, a bond eternal hath us joined." On the 20th, she said, " Just as I was waking, after my first sleep last night, I felt these words come so powerfully, Sufficient is his arm alone, and our defence is sure : —I instantly answered, *our*, what my friend and me ? it then seemed spoken again with still greater weight, Sufficient is his arm alone, and our defence is sure.

* This also has a reference to what will be more fully seen when her life is published.

This (continued she) was at the beginning of the night, and a suffering night it has been ; but a night in which I have seen the pleasure of the Lord, and felt his goodness rest upon me."

Indeed, the goodness of the Lord, and the great things that faith will do, were subjects on which she delighted to dwell. I have often heard her say, "The particular commission the Lord had given her, was to encourage souls to believe : " and herein she was greatly blessed to many.

On the 23d, she many times repeated these words, which she said came to her with unusual sweetness in the night,

My Saviour and King,
Thy succour afford,
Thy righteousness bring ;
Thy righteousness wearing, and cleans'd by thy
blood,
Bold shall I appear in the the presence of God."
All this day she had a great degree of fever upon her, and would sometimes say to me, " What were the sweet words

the Lord gave me last night ? ” As soon as I pronounced the first words, “ My Saviour,” she would go on with them, and add, “ I feel the power of them, though my head was so confused, with this fever, that I could not recollect them.”

She was always exceedingly affectionate to me ; and as it pleased God through her means, to kindle the first spark of spiritual life in my soul, I ought also to say, that nothing has ever been wanting on her part to increase the kindled fire, on the contrary, she was always a helper of my faith, as well as the most indulgent friend : numberless are the times she has expressed her strong attachment *to*, and great affection *for*, me. Never was any thing more expressive, than, on the 6th of December, while looking on me with a look of the tenderest affection, she said, “ My faithful friend, my dearest friend, ten thousand blessings on her head.” Several other times, especially in the last week

of her life, with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, she would exclaim, "What shall I do for my friend?" She has for years been in the habit of repeating the following verse;

"Thy bounteous hand with worldly bliss
Has made my cup run o'er;
And, in a kind and faithful friend,
Has doubled all my store."

She would often be crying to God for a blessing upon such and such particular souls; and all her relations, though so far from her in body, were to the last interested in her prayers: she would frequently plead with the Lord, that one day she might meet them all in glory. Ever after December begun, she was much inclined to doze, when the cough and the oppression upon her breath would allow her a degree of ease: this she would complain of, saying, "I lose my time; I want every moment to be spent in prayer or praise."

One day, I think the 6th of December, when waking out of a doze, she

said, "I am drawing near to glory:" and soon after, "There is my house and portion fair;" and again, "Jesus come, my hope of glory:" and, after a short pause, "He lifts his hands, and shews that I am graven there."

On the 7th of December, taking my hand in her's, she said, "My precious, my invaluable friend, I have prayed that light and wisdom may guide you in all, in every difficulty, and it will be so, I know it will; my prayer for thee is heard, my choice friend." This afternoon Mrs. Harper called to see her, but finding her much inclined to doze, she soon left the room: when Mrs. Fletcher opened her eyes, and found she was gone, she said, O! she's gone, without a parting word; I should have taken leave of her." As Mrs. H. was but just gone, I called her back: she then took her by the hand, and said, "May the Lord be abundantly with you, and your daughter; and I pray for your son too." All this day, at every waking interval,

she would be saying, "What mercies! Surrounded with mercies! how full of mercies I am!" All her soul seemed lost in love and praise.

The day following, the 8th, was as the day before, a day of praise for fullness of blessings ~~after~~ saying, "What mercies I am surrounded with! the use of my hands, what a comfort! how different would it be if I was not able to help myself; and with how many this is the case, who have illnesses that take away the power of helping themselves with their own hands; but I can use mine, and what a mercy!"—then, affectionately looking at me, she continued, "and what a comfort art thou, my choice friend! and the love of Jesus, O how precious! Mrs. Perks was this evening in the room with her, but she was too heavy to converse; on Mrs. Perks going, however, she came quite to herself, and said, "The Lord bless you, your partner, and children." Mrs. Perks kindly offered to sit up, but she

would never hear of any one sitting up with her till (she said) she felt the need of more help than I could give. My sister, also, was desirous of being in the room, but this she would not admit of.

All this day her breathing was exceedingly difficult: in the morning she had walked into the other room, as usual, with only the help of my arm; at the middle of the day she wished to go into the chamber again, and I led her, as at other times; but she was now weaker, and I could scarcely keep her from falling: I therefore asked her to sit down in a chair, which she did, and I wheeled her back again: with this she was much pleased, and said, the exercise had done her good. At dinner she eat a small bit of light pudding, with as much appetite as usual, but she had taken very little for some time. All the afternoon she was extremely ill, either hot to a great degree, shivering with cold, or very drowsy.

But through all, her mouth was full of the loving kindness of the Lord. She said she would not go to bed till after ten o'clock. We always prayed together before we went into the chamber, her breath being so greatly oppressed : she prayed very sweetly, but short, and then said, " Now you call upon the Lord ; I can enjoy your prayer, though not able to speak : " I did so, and found an uncommon degree of liberty while pleading the gracious promises made to the people of God. When I had ended, she said it had been to her soul a peculiar time of enjoyment, while I was calling upon the Lord ; and concluded saying, " O this has done me good. " In the afternoon, hearing that Dr. Yonge, (who has always shewn her the greatest attention,) was ill, she twice prayed particularly for him.

When we were ready to go into the chamber, and it was after ten, I got her into the chair, but she was now weaker than at noon ; however I wheeled her to

the bed side, and could not but look upon her as dying; and indeed so she considered herself, for when got into bed, she said, "My love, this is the last time I shall get into bed; it has been hard work to get in, but it is work I shall do no more: this oppression upon my breath cannot last long, but all is well; the Lord will shower down ten thousand blessings upon thee, my tender nurse, my kind friend."

After these and many more kind expressions to the same effect, and having embraced her, and put all her things as usual, she desired I would make haste to bed. I entreated her to let me sit up, repeatedly saying, "Do let me watch with you this one night:" but with all the tenderness imaginable, yet with that degree of firmness which made me unwilling to urge the request further, she said, "Go to bed; you have done all for me you can do, and you know you can be with me in a moment if I want you; but if you sit up, it will

make me uncomfortable : I cannot rest without you go to bed." I told her I had a few things to do, before I could get into bed ; she replied, " Then make haste and do them, for I want you in bed : I cannot rest till I know you are in bed." After I had made all the excuses I could for remaining up, and looking upon her dear countenance as long as her kind concern for me would admit, she still urged my going to bed, and I therefore laid me within the bed-clothes, without taking my own off ; and when she again put the question, " Are you my love in bed ?" I answered " Yes : " she then said, " That's right, now if I can rest I will ; but let our hearts be united in prayer, and the Lord bless both thee and me."

These were the last words her beloved lips uttered ; for an hour after this, about one o'clock in the morning of December 9th, the noise her breath had so long made, ceased. I thought, is she dropped asleep ? it immediately

came to my mind, "Asleep in Jesus : see a soul escape to bliss." I went directly to her bed side, where I found the beloved body without the immortal spirit, which had entered the realms of endless day. My feelings are not to be described ; I clung to the casket of the saint, I knelt down by the side of it, and cried to him who had just now called home the spirit of my friend, that the mantle might rest on me. At length I thought I should injure her dear remains, if I did not call the family up ; I therefore went and called my sister and the servant, at half past one ; after which I sent for Mrs. Perks, who kindly came over immediately. I never left the chamber, while any thing could be done for her : I had promised to be with her to the last, and the Lord enabled me so to do.

Her countenance was as sweet a one as was ever seen in death. There was at last neither sigh, groan, or struggle, but all the appearance of a person in the

most composed slumber. When I first undrew the curtain, and saw her dear head dropped off the pillow, and looking so sweetly composed, I could not persuade myself the spirit was fled, till I took her in my arms, and found no motion left. I then perceived, the moment she had so much longed for, had arrived; for I think I have heard her some hundreds of times exclaim, with the most vehement desire, "O, my Jesus, when shall I fly to thy arms!" She was always looking and waiting for the happy moment when she should gain the blissful shore, and

"See the Lamb in glory stand,
Encircled with his radiant band,
And join the angelic pow'rs."

Well,

"All that height of glorious bliss
Her everlasting portion is,
And all that heaven is her's."

For the last two years of her life she was remarkably partial to the two following hymns of Mr. Wesley's; but as

the print of the book they were in was small and pale, I wrote them out upon a sheet of paper, which lay in a desk by her side, to the last. These she greatly delighted in, calling them, her sweet hymns. As they are not in our common hymn books, I here insert them.

FIRST HYMN.

AND shall I, Lord, the cup decline,
 So wisely mixt by Love divine,
 And tasted first by thee
 The bitter draught thou drankest up,
 And but this single, sacred drop,
 Hast thou reserved for me.

Lord, I receive it at thy hand,
 And bear, by thy benign command,
 The salutary pain :
 With thee to live, I gladly die
 And suffer here, above the sky
 With my dear Lord to reign.

Here only can I shew my love,
 By suffering, my obedience prove,
 And when thy heaven I share,
 I cannot mourn for Jesu's sake,
 I cannot there thy cup partake,
 I cannot suffer there.

Full gladly, then, for thee I grieve,
 The honor of thy cross receive,
 And bless the happy load ;
 Who would not in thy footsteps tread,
 Who would not bow with thee his head,
 And sympathize with God.

SECOND HYMN.

JESUS! thy Sovereign Name I bless !
 Sorrow is joy, and pain is ease,
 To those that trust in thee :
 All things together work for good,
 To me, the purchase of thy blood,
 The much-loved sinner, me.

With thee, O Christ, on earth I reign,
 In all the awful pomp of pain;
 But send me piercing eyes,
 Th' eternal things unseen to see,
 The crown of life prepared for me,
 And glittering in the skies.

As sure as now thy cross I bear,
 I shall thy heavenly kingdom share,
 And take my seat above ;
 Celestial joy is in this pain,
 It tells me, I with thee shall reign,
 In everlasting love.

The more my sufferings here increase,
 The greater is my future bliss ;
 And thou my griefs dost tell ;
 They in thy book are noted down,
 A jewel added to my crown
 Is every pain I feel.

So be it, then, if thou ordain,
 Crowd all my happy life with pain,
 And let me daily die :
 I bow, and bless the sacred sign,
 And bear the cross, by grace divine,
 Which lifts me to the sky.

Having before mentioned the unwearied love and strong attachment she so invariably manifested towards me, I will here insert a short letter or two, which she wrote in different years, but each in the season of bodily affliction, when, to human appearance, death was nigh at hand. The first was occasioned by my expressing a wish, if I died at Madeley, that I might be buried in the same grave with her. After we had been conversing on the subject, I was called away from her, and on my return found on the table, a paper, on which she had written the following words :

My dear Friend,

As you have expressed a wish to be buried in our grave, if you should continue to wish it, I here declare my *desire* that it should *be so*. You are to me a faithful helper, and as a gracious gift of providence, I esteem and value you : and my prayer is, that after my death you may meet with the same measure from others, that you have measured unto me.

MARY FLETCHER.

I think this was written in the year 1802 or 3, but not being dated, am not certain. The following, I think was in 1806 or 7, but it also has no date.

My dear and faithful friend,

I wish to give you comfort, when I am taken from you ; and to assure you how great a favor I consider your being given to me, in the place of my dear Sally, now in glory. It is often said, God takes nothing from us, but he gives something better in the place ; and so

it has been, for though she was the most disinterested and tender friend, yet, in many things you are a still further help than she was able to be. Your tender care and attention to me, encourages me to hope, you will never want assistance, nor be left friendless; for the promise is, "what you do unto another, shall be done unto you." We are joined together in the Lord, and shall therefore be eternally one. My beloved husband and me, my friend Ryan, my Sally, and you, shall be an eternal knot which can never be separated. You know what proofs I have had that my friends in heaven do not forget me; therefore, believe we are waiting for you, yea, and longing to hail you on the shore. I might have been far more useful than I have been; but I cast all my sins on my atoning God. I pray the Spirit may richly be poured on you; and may showers of love and grace descend on the dear people. You are called to labour *here*, and God will be with you. I do believe the Lord will answer my

prayer, by supplying all your wants. I wish I could do more for you, but I commend you to him who hath said, "No manner of thing that is good shall be withheld."

Grieve not, my dear, for me. You shall soon be with me; and perhaps I shall be oftener with you than you think for; the spirits of the departed are very near to us. "We are come to them," says the Apostle.

The Lord bless and keep you, and return all your kindness a hundred fold,
prays your most faithful

everlasting friend,

M. FLETCHER.

Another of these kind tokens of her love was dated February 11th, 1810, at which time it was thought she would very soon be removed from us, but the gracious Lord had compassion upon his people, and spared her to us for above five years longer: and, O!

how was every year fraught with the fruits of righteousness. Well, she laboured, and while she did so, kept her eye upon the Saviour, whose example

“She track’d, the world she disdain’d,
And constantly trampled on pleasure and pain.”

But to return to her kind epistle, written with a view to comfort me in the separation likely to take place :

Feb. 11th, 1810.

My very dear child,

The gracious gift of God to me, how do I feel for you, who I am sensible will feel a great deal in my loss ; but I know the Lord will be with you, and count your every hair. Let not Satan tempt you, that you could have done any thing more for me than you have done ; for you have been the most tender creature in the world to me, and a great comfort. I wish I could have done more for you in a temporal way, but my gracious father, who hath cared for me, will care for you, I am confident. To his gracious protection I commit you :

we shall be one in spirit, though divided in the flesh. You may perhaps stay a little behind me, to help the dear souls in Madeley, and I trust the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out on all you are called to do in his cause, and then we shall be again re-united to part no more.

Your faithful friend for ever,

MARY FLETCHER.

The last of these loving remembrances was written two years ago, when the wound in her breast was at the worst, and it was supposed she could not survive more than a few days.

January 2d, 1814.

My dearest and best earthly friend,

I have only strength to say, I ask a thousand blessings on you, both soul and body. God will stand by you: He will help you through all. I solemnly commit you into his hands, and He is faithful to keep that we commit unto Him. We shall soon meet above, to part no more. You have been to me

the *best* of friends, and God will reward you.

I ever remain,

One with you in the Lord,

M. FLETCHER.

The last week of her life she wished to have manifested her love again in this way, but writing had long been very fatiguing to her. However she asked me for the paper, but as I knew how difficult it was to her, I said, "What is it you wish to write? let me write for you." "No, (she replied,) it won't do for you to write what I would say, but I think I am too weak for writing now: I only wanted to put it down with my own hand, before I am taken from you, how completely satisfied I am with all that you have done, and how thankful I am that my papers are all in your hands, and nothing to be printed but as you approve; and that I am fully persuaded whatever trials you may have to pass through, God will be with you." She was often telling me

how confident she was, that the Lord would make all my way plain before me; and has sometimes said, "In all the painful circumstances you will have to pass through, your language still will be, The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation."

She left nothing undone, that the creature could do, to soften the stroke of separation. While she herself stood, as the pigeon on the house-top, ready

"To clap the glad wing, and tower away,
To mingle with the blaze of day;"

her longing desire for that hour was frequently expressed by her exclaiming, "O! my God, when shall I come to thy dear bosom!" At another time she would say, "My Jesus, and my all, I pant to see thee as thou art; O come, and take me to thy loving breast." But, to write all her lively animating expressions, would fill volumes: I must therefore desist from recording any more of them, and conclude this account (which

I have many times wished some abler hand had been the writer of,) by mentioning, that at the beginning of her christian warfare, she saw, as a plan for her life, the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy, 1st Epistle, chap. v. verse 10: "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." And here I cannot but appeal to all you who have known her, whether her life has not agreed with this description, which she took as a rule for her conduct. Is she not well reported of for good [works? has she not brought up children? has she not lodged strangers? has she not washed the saints' feet? has she not relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work? These things you know she has done; yea, has she not been abundant therein? But did she value herself upon any of all the works of righteousness she wrought?

No, by no means. All her salvation she ever ascribed to him who had loved her, and washed her in his own most precious blood : therefore, with delight she would often repeat,

“ Because that I can nothing do,
 Jesus, do all the work alone ;
 And bring my soul triumphant through,
 To wave its palm before the throne.”

I must now conclude : but not without fervently praying, that the zeal, diligence, love, and humility, with all that faith *in* and ~~active~~ dependance *upon* the Saviour, that was in her, may dwell richly in each of you : and trusting that I also shall be interested in your prayers, that an abundant entrance may be administered unto me into the kingdom of our God and Saviour, after that I have for a little longer done and suffered his righteous will ; that so I may overtake my company that's gone before, and safely arrive “ where all the ship's

company meet, who sailed with the Saviour beneath."

Waiting for that happy day,

I remain,

Your affectionate friend, and willing
servant, in Christ,

MARY TOOTH.

The following hymn of Mr. Newton's, being very expressive and suitable to the occasion, was sung at Madeley, when the above letter was read there.

HYMN.

IN vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death ;
The glories that surround the saints,
When yielding up their breath.

One single sigh their fetters breaks,
We scarce can say, " They're gone ! "
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.

Faith strives, but all its efforts fail,
To trace her in her flight :
No eye can pierce within the veil
Which hides that world of light.

Thus much (and this is all) we know,
They are completely blest ;
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Saviour rest.

On harps of gold they praise his name,
His face they always view ;
Then let us followers be of them,
That we may praise him too.

Their faith and patience, love and zeal,
Should make their memory dear ;
And, Lord, do thou the prayers fulfil,
They offer'd for us here.

While they have gain'd, we losers are,
We miss them day by day ;
But thou canst every breach repair,
And wipe our tears away.

We pray, as in Elisha's case,
When great Elijah went,
May double portions of thy grace,
To us who stay, be sent.

May all the blessings of a Saviour's love,
Awake your soul his mercies to approve,
Rich in His favour fill'd with solemn joy,
Now every hour in His great work employ.

Touch'd with the ardent wish to do His will
Ever every cross walk in obedience still,
On His dear arm let all your hopes depend -
Take Him your Father, Brother, & your Friend }
Truly safe secure unto the end. - - - }

Composed by Mrs Fletcher - written by Miss Enoch of Mabely
for M. W. and den

